

February 5, 2003, Testimony of Thomas Hauser
U.S. Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation

I'd like to thank the committee for the honor of being invited here today and get very quickly to the issues at hand.

We're far past the point where we can blame the world sanctioning organizations and a handful of promoters for all of the corruption in professional boxing. The entire system is corrupt, and some of the worst enablers are in positions of power at state athletic commissions.

For eight years, the New York State Athletic Commission has been shamelessly run as a slush fund for a political party. Data made available by the New York Department of State indicates that, prior to recent budget cuts, it cost \$87,000 per fight card to regulate boxing in New York. By contrast, last year it cost Nevada only \$5,400 per card to regulate professional boxing.

When Evander Holyfield fought Lennox Lewis at Madison Square Garden, the New York State Athletic Commission assigned 25 inspectors and demanded for 67 ringside credentials. By contrast, Nevada employs only sixteen inspectors statewide and assigns no more than six inspectors to any given fight card.

On the night of the Holyfield-Lewis fight at Madison Square Garden, Robert Duffy (who was the New York State Athletic Commission director of boxing) assigned two inspectors to each fighter's corner. Then he was overruled, and four different inspectors with strong political ties were given the assignment. One of those inspectors had never worked a fight before in his life. You don't start your career as a ring inspector in the corner at a unification fight for the undisputed heavyweight championship of the world. Duffy complained and was told -- and this is a direct quote - "Hey, Duffy; you don't understand. We won the election."

Duffy was subsequently forced out of his job. The man who made that comment to him now runs the New York State Athletic Commission on a daily basis.

Until recently, the Nevada State Athletic Commission was considered the best-run athletic commission in the country. A number of dedicated competent public servants like executive director Marc Ratner still work there. But the Nevada State Athletic Commission is now a textbook example of conflicts of interest run amok.

Tony Alamo is a senior vice president at Mandalay Bay Resort and Casino and the man primarily responsible for overseeing boxing at Mandalay Bay. Tony Alamo, Jr. sits on the Nevada State Athletic Commission, which is charged with regulating his father's boxing promotions. The situation was further exacerbated on January 13th of this year, when Edwin "Flip" Homansky (a nationally respected

administrator) was removed as vice chairman of the Nevada Commission and replaced by Tony Alamo, Jr.

It might be that Tony Alamo, Jr. is totally independent of his father. But everyone in boxing who I've talked with doubts it. And his presence on the Nevada State Athletic Commission sends a powerful message regarding government-sanctioned conflicts of interest.

Also, nationwide, many state athletic commissions are afraid to enforce the laws that Congress has passed because they know that, if they do, big fights will simply go elsewhere.

I'll give you an example.

Section 11(d)(1) of the Muhammad Ali Boxing Reform Act requires all sanctioning organizations to submit a complete description of their ratings criteria to the Federal Trade Commission and the Association of Boxing Commissions. Each of the major sanctioning organizations purports to have filed this information. The problem is, most of their filings are fraudulent.

The World Boxing Organization had a dead man ranked in the top ten of its super-middleweight division for four months. During that same four-month period, the dead man rose in the rankings from number seven to number five.

This past autumn, the World Boxing Association released rankings that were so outrageous and, in the heavyweight division, so tied to the interests of one promoter that Senator McCain of this Committee wrote a letter of protest.

Section 6 of the Ali Act provides that the chief law enforcement officer of any state may bring a civil action to enjoin the holding within its borders of any professional boxing match related to a false filing. No such civil action has ever been brought.

Section 6 of the Ali Act also provides that a world sanctioning organization that files incomplete or false information shall not be entitled to receive any compensation, directly or indirectly, in connection with a boxing match including sanctioning fees. That provision is not being enforced by any state.

And Section 6 of the Ali Act provides that violation of the disclosure requirements is a criminal offense punishable by up to one year in prison and a fine of up to \$100,000. The Criminal Division of the Justice Department is responsible for these prosecutions, but no such indictment has ever been brought.

Why have laws if no one is going to enforce them?

Boxing needs strong federal regulation by knowledgeable personnel who assume their positions of power without conflicts of interest. And while we're waiting for legislation to create this regulation, I respectfully suggest that it's imperative for the federal government to act now through criminal prosecutions as well as civil lawsuits brought by the Justice Department and Federal Trade Commission to enforce the laws as they're currently written.

This Committee cannot rely on state athletic commissions to clean up boxing. And the Association of Boxing Commissions is nothing but a collective of the same officials who have failed to enforce the law on the state level.

Thomas Hauser

Thomas Hauser was born in New York and attended both college (BA 1967) and law school (JD 1970) at Columbia. After graduating from law school, he clerked for a federal judge until November 1971, when he started work as a litigator for the Wall Street law firm of Cravath Swaine & Moore.

In 1977, Hauser began to write. Since then, he has authored twenty-eight books on subjects ranging from moral values to Beethoven. His first book -- *Missing* -- was nominated for the Pulitzer Prize, Bancroft Prize, and National Book Award, and served as the basis for the Academy-Award-winning film starring Jack Lemmon and Sissy Spacek. *The Beethoven Conspiracy* -- Hauser's thriller about the search for a lost Beethoven symphony -- won the Prix Lafayette, awarded biannually in France to the outstanding book by an American. Subsequently, Hauser co-authored *Final Warning: The Legacy of Chernobyl*, again demonstrating his ability to explain and bring to life events of complexity and importance. The film version of *Final Warning* starred Jon Voight and Jason Robards.

Hauser's most celebrated work to date is *Muhammad Ali: His Life And Times* -- the definitive biography of the most famous man on earth. Like *Missing*, the Ali book was nominated for a Pulitzer Prize and the National Book Award. The British edition was honored with the William Hill Book of the Year Award in England. Subsequently, Ali and Hauser co-authored *HEALING: A Journal of Tolerance And Understanding* and criss-crossed the country, meeting with student audiences on their subject. For their efforts to combat bigotry and prejudice, they were named as co-recipients of the 1998 Haviva Reik Award.

Nine of Hauser's twenty-eight books have dealt with boxing. In addition to *Muhammad Ali: His Life And Times*, they include *The Black Lights*, *Muhammad Ali: In Perspective*, *Mark Twain Remembers*, *Muhammad Ali: Memories*, *A Beautiful Sickness*, *Muhammad Ali & Company*, *Brutal Artistry*, and *A Year At The Fights*.

Hauser has written articles for *The New Yorker*, *The New York Times*, and numerous other publications and also for the HBO and Showtime boxing websites and Secondsout.com. He is currently vice president of the Boxing Writers Association of America and was recently retained by the *Encyclopedia Britannica* to author entries on Muhammad Ali and boxing.